

Digital Technology

The World is Changing. Personal Computer and laptop sales are down significantly. Smart phones and tablets are replacing them. Newspapers are thinner, many have consolidated or downsized, and some are now coffee shops and internet cafes. Phone books are gone and the Yellow Pages are half-sized and have few listings. People are communicating on the web and with smart phones. Today's soldier talks to his family and friends from the combat zone using live video! **News travels as it happens.**

Technology is a Two-edged Sword. Posts are filled with seasoned Legionnaires that have seen service in Korea and Vietnam and we are trying to attract Post-911 veterans and active duty members.

Seasoned members look for **printed** news, magazines, and newsletters. They watch television and make personal phone calls. Many love to receive mailed newsletters and veteran magazines! Most raised families on one income, had plenty of time to spare, live near their post and often seemed to "live" there. Their kids grew up on post and neighborhood activities. Some use technology, many more do not. The oldest Vietnam veterans are in their 70's and we lose them faster than World War II vets.

Post-911 veterans are most likely going to school again, may be on military disability or need assistance with a VA claim or services. Their spouses work, they have one or two jobs, and often live greater distances from an established post. Their kids are in dance, little league, soccer, or spend after school hours in a day care center. Most are tech savvy and have a smart phone; as do their spouse and kids.

 **Do not abandon the needs of the seasoned veteran** to attract others. It is a balancing act. ***Do not eliminate one way of communicating that has served you well to move to newer technology without ensuring that you take care of the needs of all. Keep newsletters alive!***

The American Legion Constitution preamble sets the standard and basis for American Legion and our mission.

- ... "to foster and perpetuate a 100-percent Americanism;
- to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the great wars; to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation;" ...
- "to promote peace and good will on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy;
- to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness."

We do this by communicating to our members and our community.

Harness digital technology to support post membership and drive post membership programs. It is your means of putting a face on Legionnaires and what they do locally. Non-members and community

groups seek information on you before they commit to joining. We are often surprised to find that they know more about our Post than some of our members! They are qualifying our Post before they reach out. And, most importantly, post members need to be proud of what they are doing and have done. Find and tell their stories and broadcast information on Post activities. Let everyone know what is happening, going to happen, or has happened.

Be visible

- **If you are not in the local paper** or on the radio **at least once a week**, you are not visible.
- **If your phone rings to an answering machine**, you are not visible.
- **If you don't have a post website** you are not visible. Be your newspaper.

Using Digital Technology. Be careful as you structure for the future. Ask yourself, "Can the post afford a post website or telephone system?" The answer is "Yes!" The post does not even need to own a computer, expensive operating systems or software, or office space. What the post does need is one or more volunteers to do the leg work, and

- ▲ Ensure that post mail, email, and documents are protected and stored properly.
- ▲ Ensure that all electronic account information and passwords are documented.
- ▲ Keep everything simple so that others can easily use what you build.

Ensure all of your members get post information. Do not assume everyone gets everything.

- ▲ **Telephones.** Not every post member now has a home phone. Some have pulled the plug! Find out who is in this group and put them on a visitation list.
- ▲ **Newsletters.** Some posts stopped newsletters and use email. Some don't use email. Keep a newsletter alive with just a one or two-page letter. Publish events, dates, **and something about at least one member!** Publish on your website, but mail to those who do not have a computer.
- ▲ **Contact Lists/Automated telephone calling services/phone trees.** Do not exclude anyone.

Email. Every post should have a permanent email account. Never rely on your personal email account. Use one that can be shared by Post Commander, Adjutant, and Quartermaster.

- ▲ Consider no-cost Google Gmail for post email; i.e., chapelhillpost6@gmail.com
 - Includes file sharing, cloud communications and file storage, YouTube access and web photo storage and display.
 - Includes a very powerful Google Office package for creating and storing documents.
 - Includes **Google Voice** – no cost VOIP telephone and call forwarding. Google Voice also offers Conference Calling at no cost!

Photography. Use Google Photos for photo storing, editing, collages, slideshows, and resizing.

Adobe Scan for Android. Scan documents via your smartphone,

American Legion

Department of North Carolina

PhotoScan by Google – Scan photos and documents to photos.google.com

Post telephone. Answering machines are ignored as they don't get responses. They are on a time-pushed deadline. One post reports that they get more calls, “**because nearby posts had an answering machine and would not answer the phone when called.**” Use [Google Voice](#).

Phone trees. Consider Wizardphone.com. A 3 cent per call automated emergency phone tree.

Build a website with WordPress.com. **WordPress.com** is an awesome no-cost web site package. You get to choose from a large selection of templates. Purchase a domain name from them, if you use free site.

- Obtain a dedicated address for a nominal annual cost.
- Publish post news, photos, videos, announcement to the Latest News component. Replaces email announcements. See District 12 website for ideas: <http://americanlegiondistrict12nc.org/>
- Display static pages as your post's marquee. It's your post's storefront and your face to the community.

NCLegion.org. Publicize the Department's Website. It is full of current news, resources, the monthly mailing, and links to important sites and posts. Ensure you provide your post website information to the department. See: <http://NCLegion.org>

Local Newspapers and radio. Publicize post program results. When are contests and who won? Post on your website, but share the story with local media. Include a story and pictures. Next year's new members will find what you did this year. **Write Press Releases** for local media.

Social Networking. Facebook and Tweeter. Both are popular, Tweeter is getting more traffic. A good thing for post visibility, but be careful of what you post. Broadcast upcoming events on FaceBook!

Available resources

Sample North Carolina Post Website using WordPress.com. Look at Chapel Hill Post 6. This site uses a combined blog and static web page model. There are extensive links to other resources, videos, maps, photos, projects completed, and post activities. See: <http://chapelhillpost6.com/>

Website Training:

1. WordPress for Beginners. Magazine format, \$29.99 at Barnes and Noble (magazine rack). DiscountMags has it on-line for \$11.99.
2. WordPress.com – On-line free training; text and video.



Software (no-cost)

1. **Office Suite** (text, spreadsheet, presentations, and database). LibreOffice.org or OpenOffice.org. A full office suite and PDF generator.
2. **Photo editor.** Photos by Google. <https://photos.google.com/>

American Legion

Department of North Carolina

3. [CutePDF Writer](#) – Create PDFs. Store on-line forms with data intact. No-cost solution!
4. **Google Chromecast**. A \$35 dongle that can send laptop/smart phone/tablet viewable items wirelessly to the post's large screen television via HDMI port (needs internet connection). Great for training sessions or to show photos!
5. **Google Projects** – Project Manager.

The opportunities are limited only by your imagination.